

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraphs [0017], [0018], [0022], [0024] and [0028], with substitute paragraphs [0017,] [0018], [0022], [0024], and [0028] as shown below.

B1 [0017] In an exemplary embodiment, a telephony network is integrated with a data network to provide an affordable system for carrying out the present invention. Figure 2[[A]] shows an architecture that may be used to implement an embodiment of the present invention. For clarity in this description, Figure 2[[A]] shows two basic domains: Public switched telephone network (PSTN) domain 100 and packet-switched data network domain 200. However, the line of demarcation between the domains is arbitrary. PSTN domain 100 includes the same elements as described above in relation to Figure 1. As noted above, packet-switched data network domain 200 may be any suitable data network, including, for example, an Internet Protocol (IP) network.

[0018] Media gateways 112 and 114 may provide an interface between PSTN domain 100 and packet-switched data network domain 200. Packet-switched data network domain 200 may comprise conference server 202, call agent 204, application server 206, presence database 208 (see Figure 3) and packet telephony client 210. In an embodiment of the present invention, media gateways 112 and 114 may be the same gateway, that is a single system may be used to provide an inbound and outbound interface between telephony domain 100 and Packet-switched data network domain 200. Packet telephony client 210 may be collocated with telephone 106 (i.e., the subscriber may implement a monitoring system to screen calls forwarded to voice mail using a computer system in proximity to his subscriber telephone). Alternatively, packet

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telephony client may be at a remote location allowing the subscriber to monitor calls from other locations. The functions and operations of these systems (i.e., gateways, servers, packet telephony client, and the like) are described in more detail below.

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[0022] In one embodiment of the present invention, which may be implemented using an architecture show in Figure 2A, application server 206 instructs call agent 204 to initiate call legs between the caller, the VMS system, and the packet client telephony client 210 through conference server 202 even if the subscriber is not available at packet telephony client 210. In this embodiment, application server 206 may first instruct call agent 204 to set up call legs (i.e., voice paths) 12, 14, and 16 from inbound media gateway 112 to conference server 202, from conference server 202 to media gateway 114, and from outbound media gateway 114 to VMS server 108 (via switch 104), respectively. Call agent 204 may send appropriate instructions to inbound media gateway 112, conference server 202 and outbound media gateway 114 via communications links 1, 3 and 4, respectively. Accordingly, in this embodiment, application server 206 does not check to determine whether or not the subscriber has actually logged into the network and conference resources are allocated to provide a voice path between the caller and VMS server 108.

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[0024] Application server 206 may instruct call agent 204 to send an invitation to the subscriber to join the conference call. In response to the instruction, call agent 204 may send a message to packet telephony client 210 via communications link 6. The message may inform the subscriber that a caller is recording a message to his voice messaging system and may provide an opportunity for the subscriber to monitor the call. If the subscriber accepts the invitation, a voice

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only

path may be established, via communications link 18 [[20]], between packet telephony client 210 and conference server 202. Once all of the voice paths have been established, a three-way conference call is in progress between the caller at telephone 116, VMS server 108 and the subscriber at packet telephony client 210. If the subscriber declines the invitation, or there is no response from packet telephony client 210, the call between the caller and VMS server 108 continues unimpeded, but still utilizes resources on conference server 202.

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[0028] In other embodiments of the invention, if the subscriber has multimedia capabilities (e.g., a microphone and speakers) on packet telephony client 210 he may be provided the capability to accept the call and become a full participant in the call. For example, in one embodiment of the present invention, the subscriber may select an option provided by programming logic on packet telephony client 210 to join the call. In this embodiment, packet telephony client 210 may send a message to call agent 204 indicating the subscriber's intent to answer the call. Call agent 204 may then instruct conference server 202 to drop VMS server [[104]] 108 (and media gateway 114) from the call. Packet telephony client 210 (or conference server 202) may then allow a two-way communication between the caller and the subscriber, via conference server 202.
